



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: May 31, 2006

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HOTEL MANAGER ARRAIGNED ON HURRICANE RELATED FRAUD

(Texarkana, TX) United States Attorney Matthew D. Orwig announced that a 64-year-old Texarkana hotel manager was arraigned today on charges of hurricane related wire fraud in the Eastern District of Texas. **DENA FUSELIER**, of Atlanta, Texas, was indicted by a federal grand jury on May 2, 2006 and charged with five counts of wire fraud in connection with her job as the general manager of the Ramada Inn in Texarkana, Texas.

U.S. Attorney Orwig said his office remained diligent in the pursuit of any form of hurricane fraud, "Even as a new hurricane season begins tomorrow, communities in the Eastern District of Texas continue to struggle to recover from last year's storms. Hurricane related fraud will remain a priority in this office and we will aggressively investigate and prosecute suspected violators."

According to the indictment, during September and October, 2005, Fuselier allegedly instructed employees of the Ramada Inn to check each hurricane evacuee into the hotel for a 14-day period. Fuselier further instructed the hotel's employees that should an evacuee check-out of the hotel prior to the 14-day period, the evacuee should be maintained on the hotel's computer system as if they were still a guest of the hotel. Fuselier instructed hotel employees to transfer the names of evacuees who had checked-out from the original room they were assigned to an "off market" room. Off market rooms are those rooms at the Ramada Inn which are under

renovation or used for storage and not available for hotel guests. False billing statements were then sent to Corporate Lodging Consultants, Inc, the contracting agent for the American National Red Cross responsible for reimbursing hotels for lodging costs of hurricane evacuees. As a result, the Red Cross was defrauded of \$19,980.00 for reimbursements for hotel rooms not occupied by hurricane evacuees.

Fuselier entered a plea of NOT GUILTY to all counts in the indictment and was released on bond pending trial. A trial is scheduled for August 8, 2006. If convicted, Fuselier faces up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 on each count of the indictment. It is important to note that an indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of either guilt or innocence.

This case is part of an initiative by the Department of Justice Hurricane Fraud Task Force, established by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft and insurance and benefits fraud.

The case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Barry Bryant.

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